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Population Characteristics

VOTER PARTICIPATION IN NOVEMBER 1972

(Advance statistics)

Young adults who were eligible to vote for the first time in 1972 did not exercise their franchise as many had expected in the election of November 1972. Among the 11.0 million persons 18 to 20 years old who were old enough to vote for President for the first time, only some 48 percent reported that they voted. Among those 21 to 24 years old, 51 percent reported that they voted. In contrast, among those 25 years of age or over, 66 percent cast their ballots in the election. The highest voter participation rate was reported by persons 45 to 64 years old, as 71 percent of the persons in this age group reported that they voted. These estimates are advance figures for the civilian noninstitutional population from the November 1972 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.¹

Participation in the election varied not only by age, but also by sex and race. A smaller proportion of women than of men were reported as having voted--62 percent for women versus 64 percent for men. The proportion of voters was higher for the white population of voting age than for the Negro population of voting age. About 65 percent of the whites, and 52 percent of Negroes, reported that they voted in the November 1972 election. About 38 percent of persons of Spanish origin reported that they voted.² Overall voter

participation rates in the election of November 1972 were about 5 percentage points lower than in the November 1968 Presidential election.

The survey results show that 98.5 million persons, or 72 percent of those eligible on the basis of age, were reported as registered to vote. Of

Table A. Reported Voter Participation Rates, by Region and Race: November 1972, 1970, 1968, and 1966

(Civilian noninstitutional population)

Region, race, and origin	Percent of the population of voting age who reported that they voted			
	1972	1970	1968	1966
UNITED STATES				
All races.....	63.0	54.6	67.8	55.4
White.....	64.5	56.0	69.1	57.1
Negro.....	52.1	43.5	57.6	41.8
Spanish origin.....	37.5	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
NORTH AND WEST				
All races.....	66.4	59.0	71.0	60.9
White.....	67.5	59.8	71.8	61.8
Negro.....	56.6	51.4	64.8	52.1
SOUTH				
All races.....	55.4	44.7	60.1	43.0
White.....	57.0	46.4	61.9	45.2
Negro.....	47.8	36.8	51.6	32.9

NA Not available.

¹The civilian noninstitutional population in the United States as of November 1, 1972, was 136,203,000. The resident population including Armed Forces in each State and the District of Columbia and inmates of institutions was 139,642,000, as published in Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 479.

²Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race but most are classified as white.

those registered, 87 percent reported that they voted. The proportion of persons of voting age who were not registered was highest for persons in the youngest age groups, those 18 to 24 years old. Among persons of this age, 41 percent reported that they were not registered.

Table B. Reported Registration Rates, by Region and Race: November 1972, 1970, 1968, and 1966

(Civilian noninstitutional population)

Region, race, and origin	Percent of the population of voting age who reported that they were registered			
	1972	1970	1968	1966
UNITED STATES				
All races.....	72.3	68.1	74.3	70.3
White.....	73.4	69.1	75.4	71.7
Negro.....	65.5	60.8	66.2	60.2
Spanish origin.....	44.4	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
NORTH AND WEST				
All races.....	73.9	70.0	76.5	73.8
White.....	74.9	70.8	77.2	74.6
Negro.....	67.0	64.5	71.8	68.8
SOUTH				
All races.....	68.7	63.8	69.2	62.2
White.....	69.8	65.1	70.8	64.3
Negro.....	64.0	57.5	61.6	52.9

NA Not available.

Approximately 73 percent of the white population of voting age reported that they registered, as compared with 66 percent of the Negro population and 44 percent of the persons of Spanish origin. Of these registered persons, about 88 percent of the whites and 80 percent of the Negroes reported that they voted. The percent of registered persons of Spanish origin who voted is estimated at around 84 percent. Because of small sample size, the estimates of voting rates among registered persons of Spanish origin may vary by plus or minus 5 percentage points and, therefore, may not differ from the rates for the other groups.

Among persons 18 to 24 years old in November 1972, 52 percent of whites and 35 percent of Negroes, reported that they voted; also 61 percent of whites and 48 percent of Negroes reported that they were registered.

Table C. Reported Registration and Voter Participation Rates, by Age and Race: November 1972

(Civilian noninstitutional population)

Age and race	Percent reported registered	Percent reported voted
All races.....	72.3	63.0
18 to 24 years old.....	58.9	49.6
25 years old and over.....	75.3	65.9
White.....	73.4	64.5
18 to 24 years old.....	60.6	51.9
25 years old and over.....	76.1	67.2
Negro.....	65.5	52.1
18 to 24 years old.....	47.7	34.7
25 years old and over.....	70.5	57.1

Statistics presented in this report are based on answers to a series of questions asked of a sample of persons of voting age 2 weeks after the elections of November X. The questions were designed to provide information on voting behavior of the various segments of the population of voting age.

Official counts of the number of votes cast in the 1972 elections are not yet available for comparison with the figures from the Current Population Survey. However, previous Current Population Survey estimates of the number of persons voting have been somewhat higher than the official counts. This type of difference has also been noted in other surveys of voting behavior in which people are asked to report on whether they had voted. Despite this limitation, which may introduce some unknown biases in the results, the data presented in this report can be regarded as providing useful measures of differences in voting behavior among classes of the population. A detailed discussion of factors which may account for differences between figures from the CPS and official counts was published in the report "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1970," Series P-20, No. 228.

Since the data are based on a sample of the population, they are, of course, also subject to sampling errors. Confidence limits of 95 percent probability were applied to all statements of this report. This means that the chances are at least 19 in 20 that a difference identified in the text indicates a true difference in the population rather than the chance variations arising from the use of samples. Estimates of the size of the sampling errors will be included in a forthcoming detailed report.